

Look both ways

This Summer we've gone for something a little different. We have two covers. Some of you will have an image of Ken Done's *Cadmium Coral head* (2010) on the cover, and some will have a still image from the *Hippy and the Snake* (2011) video by Petrina Hicks. Both covers are evocatively 'summer' in mood or subject, and both are recent works from current solo exhibitions. Done and Hicks, though, are two artists you wouldn't normally expect to be paired together. Hicks, based in Berlin for the past year, largely works in photo-media and film and is widely acclaimed as one of Australia's leading 'Gen-X/Y' artists. Done, on the other hand, in his seventies and his fifth decade of artistic practice, has never really garnered the sort of contemporary art accolades (at least in Australia) enjoyed even by an early-career artist such as Hicks.

Perhaps this is not such an exceptional contrast; there are many artists, young and old – talented, prolific and commercially successful – who are never really appreciated in a 'contemporary art' light. Which leads to the perennial question: what makes the 'contemporary' in contemporary art? Is it an inherent quality of experimentation, internationalism, irony, or intent that marks one work as 'contemporary', and another (from the same time) as simply 'art'? Who decides what is 'in' and what is 'out'?

Done has actually appeared on an *Art Monthly* cover before. Our November 1995 issue cover (pictured) is a photographic portrait of him in his studio by Anne Zahalka, followed by a lead article by Peter Anderson which challenges the Australian art world's reception of Done's work;¹ at that time Done had failed to make an entry in Susan McCulloch's 1994 *Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, and his work wasn't held in any significant public collections, save for numerous design-related examples (with Graeme Davey/SPS Advertising agency) which had been gifted to the National Gallery of Australia. Today, it's much the same story though Done has since had two works enter the National Portrait Gallery collection. He is as prolific as ever; while his painting on this month's cover comes from his first major show in Australia for three years, it's accompanied by concurrent shows in Melbourne and Canberra, and by overseas shows in the preceding years. Done clearly (and rightly) sees himself at the peak of his practice: 'It takes half a life-time to figure out what you're doing as a painter'.

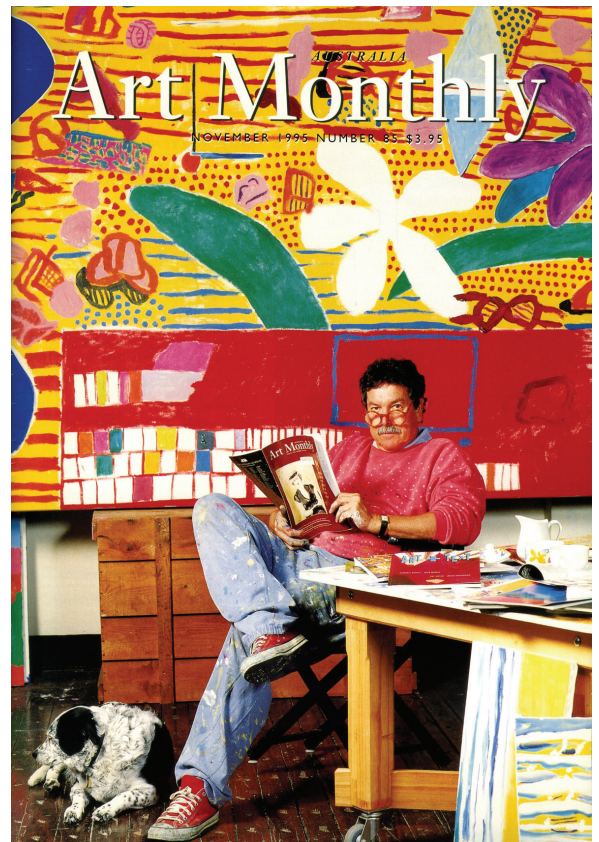
Art criticism plays an important role in the way a work or career is considered. In looking back this month, and at the critical split presented by Hicks and Done, we also look ahead to our milestone 250th issue next year, in June 2012, which will be a commemorative issue on the 'art of art criticism' – also the theme of our 4th Emerging Arts Writers' Award next year. Apart from this issue and Award, *Art Monthly* will also celebrate this milestone with a fundraising auction and dinner on 29 June in Canberra, and you're all invited! So please keep this date in mind and related details as they are revealed in the coming months.

This editorial's encouragement to 'Look Both Ways' pays tribute to the late Sarah Watt (1958-2011), one of the country's most original and gracious talents (in animation and film) of the past twenty-five years. And in an issue which turns to chess, among other diverse intellectual and aesthetic pursuits, this move with the dual cover images is also a nod to my late father, Maurice F. O'Riordan (1926-2008), a keen lover of the game.

May all our summers be in peace,

Maurice

1. Peter Anderson, 'Ken Done's image problem', *Art Monthly Australia*, No. 85, November 1995, pp. 4-6.



Let's get ... Critical?

Art Monthly Australia's 4th Emerging Arts Writers' Award is dedicated to the art of art criticism, the winning entry to be published in our commemorative 250th issue (June 2012) titled 'Critical lining'.

Initial enquiries to:
art.monthly@anu.edu.au

Entries close 29 February 2012.